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The Life of William Pitt, Earl of Chatham. By BASIL WILLIAMS.

In two volumes. (London, New York, Bombay, and Calcutta: Longmans, Green, and Company. 1913. Pp. x, 408; vi, 421.)

It would be interesting to inquire why so much attention has recently been given to the elder Pitt after a century of comparative neglect. May not the explanation partly be that whereas Pitt was a Liberal and an Imperialist, Imperialists during the nineteenth century have rarely been Liberals while Liberals have mostly renounced empire? The man who wished to maintain the old colonial system and yet rejoiced that America had resisted, could not but be half jingo to all who were of the Manchester way of thinking, and half demagogue to the hard-shell Tories who voted with the Duke of Wellington or the soft kind who took their political philosophy from Disraeli. But in recent years, both in England and in this country, a kind of nexus has been formed between Liberalism and Imperialism; and now that Americans find it possible to defend the Navigation Acts, and Englishmen make nothing of justifying the revolt of the colonies, it would be strange indeed if there was none to relate the deeds of Chatham. Mr. Williams, regarding his subject from this new point of view, finds it unnecessary to disparage either the war minister or the Great Commoner: it was a great thing to have won an empire; but the greater glory was "to have united a people", and to have formulated the "principles on which all states must be successfully governed, the principles of justice and true wisdom".

Yet Mr. Williams's reverence for Pitt never seduces him into panegyric. He tells a round, unvarnished tale, without brilliance of style indeed, but clearly and effectively, in judicial temper, and with scrupulous accuracy in matters of fact. The soundness of his scholarship cannot be doubted. Apart from the German archives, he knows the manuscript sources quite as well as Albert von Ruville; the printed sources he knows better; and he is more familiar with English custom and English character. If it were only a matter of what Pitt said and did, Dr. von Ruville's book would have made Mr. Williams's work superfluous. Happily, both writers are concerned with motive as well as with action; and in the interpretation of motive they differ fundamentally. "In all cases", says von Ruville, with a lack of qualification which his book does not always support indeed, Pitt's "objects were eminently practical and selfish; he supported everything that could help his plans and opposed all that thwarted them". For Mr. Williams, on the contrary, Pitt was a man, if ever there was one, of lofty and disinterested patriotism, a man who, in office and out, subordinated personal ambition to the welfare of England.

The satisfactory resolution of this antinomy would doubtless require an excursion into the psychology of motive. However that may be, we need not deny, since he did not deny it himself, that Pitt was ambitious for office, or that when in office he advocated measures which he had uncompromisingly denounced while in opposition. But if it be true that

he made office the first object and deliberately assumed or laid off political convictions in order to get it, it is clear that he made at the outset one capital miscalculation: by uselessly wounding the king, he drew upon himself the royal displeasure which for nearly twenty years was a chief obstacle blocking his way into the cabinet. I have never been able to understand how a man of Pitt's perspicacity could have made such a stupendous blunder. And in very truth, if the Great Commoner's course was shaped by the compass of selfish ambition, and all his convictions were but ballast to a topping rhetoric, he was indeed an unskilled pilot the whole voyage. What could Talleyrand have learned from the career of Chatham!

If Dr. von Ruville is too subtle by half, Mr. Williams is perhaps not subtle enough. For the better understanding of Chatham, what is now needed is neither new documents nor further summaries of his speeches (many of them, alas, written by Dr. Johnson!), but a more skillful analysis of his mind and character. I am persuaded that such an analysis—not easily made, it is true—would have spared Mr. Williams the hopeless task of making his hero's early conduct appear consistent, and Dr. von Ruville the ungrateful one of searching out a sordid motive for actions which were often enough not inspired by conscious motive at all. Much of Pitt's early inconsistency was due to the circumstance that he had words and the power of speech before he had matured political convictions. Pitt was no logician, but a man of action who learned how a thing ought to be done only by doing it. As he had little to do in the early years except to harangue, he learned a good deal about making speeches, but very little about how to govern England. "I know that I can save England", he cried. Quite true; but he could not tell any one else how to save England, actually did not himself know how it was to be done, until he set about doing it. When his hand was at last on the helm, then he knew, not from chart or compass, but by feeling the current's pressure on the rudder, where the ship must go. After that experience, no more uncertainty; all his cardinal political ideas became emotional convictions, as unreasoned and as enduring as a religious faith.

With an insight equal to his sympathy and his knowledge, Mr. Williams would have given us a more human, a more convincing Pitt. But his Pitt is more convincing than Dr. von Ruville's. For if Pitt had really been the kind of man Dr. von Ruville makes him out to be, it would never have been worth while, as Mr. Egerton well says, to write so many thick volumes about him.

CARL BECKER.

The Fall of the Dutch Republic. By HENDRIK WILLEM VAN LOON.
(Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company. 1913.
Pp. xii, 433.)

"WE are endeavoring to make the history of a very dull period readable" (p. 55). In this, the author has succeeded. His book will be